

CSGA

Connecticut State Golf Association

Steward of Connecticut Golf Since 1899

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Rojas, Senator Fasano, Representative Aman and distinguished members of the Planning & Development Committee. My name is Mike Moraghan, I am Executive Director of the Connecticut State Golf Association. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 5332, An Act Concerning the Taxation of Certain Public Golf Courses.

I'd like to invite everyone in this room today to do something very simple - when the snow finally melts!

Come out to one of our golf courses here in Connecticut and just look around. You will see before you a perfect example of open space. You will see acres of green grass, trees, flowers, flowering bushes, and all types of birds and animals that live in these partially wooded open spaces.

All of our golf courses, public or private, in pristine condition or in need of mowing or better care, represent environmental, green space treasures. When you see this, please ask yourself: how could they be assessed and taxed as anything but open space?

To tax a set of golf holes, which at their essence are nothing more than acres of grass and trees, often times at wildly inflated rates is illogical, and threatens the existence of these facilities and consequently these open spaces.

Golf course operations are small businesses, often family owned and operated. They employ people, they provide health and recreation benefits for their customers, and they provide green buffers to excess development.

Consider what used to be Canton Public Golf Course along Route 44. You could see it from the road, great stretches of green grass with a little creek running through it; people out there walking around, breathing fresh air. Much of that land is now covered by pavement; what you have instead of grass and trees is a shopping mall with lots of stop signs and parking spaces.

I imagine tax revenue went up, but how is that weighed against increased pressure on sewage systems, trash disposal, demand for essential services – police, fire, and rescue, increased pressure on school systems, light and noise pollution and traffic – more car exhaust as vehicles sit idling at more stoplights, and more foul storm water runoff from more paved surfaces. This is what we get when open space is lost to urban sprawl. So even if there is some tax money left over after the additional services are paid for, what is the cost to our quality of life?

It is this concern that visionary legislators recognized years ago – that large tracts of green, open space are essential to our lives. Golf courses provide this – in addition to employment and recreation benefits. The bill you have before you is a step in the right direction. I would ask that you take an even greater stride – and mandate that every golf course in Connecticut, public or private be assessed as open space. That would be the greatest assurance that these businesses can survive and their green, open space can be preserved.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify and would be glad to answer any questions.